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RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1839
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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4691
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1350
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000546

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: HARARE: OBSERVERS' PERSPECTIVES CONTRAST SHARPLY

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4(d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Against the backdrop of a unanimous UN Security Council statement noting concern over politically-motivated violence in Zimbabwe and the announcement by opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai that he will not participate in the June 27 presidential run-off, poloffs met separately with heads of the African Union (AU) and Pan-African Parliament (PAP) observer missions to seek their impression of recent developments and thoughts on next steps. The heads of mission relayed distinctly different perspectives. AU Head of Mission and former President of Sierra Leone Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was defensive of Mugabe's legacy, looking to downplay violence and support a government of national unity. Kabbah also noted that Zimbabwean law, not international law, should determine the legal consequences of Tsvangirai's decision to boycott. Conversely, PAP Head of Mission and Swazi MP Marwick Khumalo stated that the election environment was decidedly not free or fair, and that the PAP would continue to monitor the situation through Friday in an effort to prevent the election's "legitimization" by ZANU-PF. END SUMMARY.

AU Head: Don't blow the violence "out of proportion"

12. (C) On June 27, poloff joined the incoming Dutch DCM and Dutch poloff for a meeting with the Head of the African Union Observer Mission, former Sierra Leone President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Kabbah confirmed that the 35-person delegation had arrived on June 21 and had yet to have any substantive meetings or deploy any observers to the field. Kabbah related his plans to meet with the SADC head of mission and Zimbabwe's Attorney General soon, preferably on June 25. Kabbah stated he also planned to meet key stakeholders (though he noted that he had yet to arrange any additional meetings, which he blamed on "campaign schedules"), and remain "objective and focus on peace." Kabbah noted that he believed it was imperative to avoid placing blame for the violence or "blow out of proportion what may not exist." Alluding to recent statements by Mugabe, Kabbah lamented the

"polarized environment's scary messages," that could mean disaster for the country.

13. (C) However, Kabbah stated that it was his priority to examine the "legal implications" of Tsvangirai's withdrawal from the run-off. He was adamant that the international community must accept "Zimbabwean law, not international law" on the issue and avoid a "vacuum of leadership that could lead to chaos and be impossible to manage." Kabbah confirmed that, for him, the final legal authority on the matter would be Zimbabwe's Attorney General.

14. (C) Kabbah cast his role in the coming days as a mediator, noting that he arrived in Zimbabwe believing that, no matter who won the June 27 contest, "some kind of government of national unity would be needed in which the winner brought the other in, or his people, to work for the good of the country." Kabbah highlighted his pre-March 29 meeting with Tsvangirai, in which the opposition leader "recognized that Mugabe was the father of the country and affirmed he (Tsvangirai) was not out for revenge," as well as a subsequent conversation with Mugabe in which he relayed Tsvangirai's message. He said Mugabe was "pleased." Kabbah appealed to the Dutch DCM to arrange a meeting between Kabbah and Tsvangirai (then sheltered at the Netherlands Chancery); the DCM replied that he would forward the message.

Rumors of U.S. and UK Troops

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15. (C) Kabbah asked what the Dutch and U.S. Missions had observed and was informed about incidents of violence and concerns raised by the SADC delegation. The Dutch DCM mentioned reports of torture and death, which were met with expressions of doubt by AU staff in the room. Kabbah again noted that there were many "rumors" in Zimbabwe, and told us he had heard disturbing reports that the UK and U.S. were deploying armed forces to Botswana with the intent of destabilizing the Zimbabwean government. When asked to expound, Kabbah relented that he had "not put a lot of faith" in the report.

"No problems"

16. (C) Although he had not yet had a formal meeting with the SADC team, Kabbah stated that in his recent informal conversations with the Angolan head of the observer mission, he had "not been given the impression of problems" related to access and understood that SADC was prepared to continue its observation of the election. (NOTE: This is in contradiction to emboff meetings with SADC observers, who have expressed grave concern about the election environment. END NOTE.) If Tsvangirai was willing to contest the election, Kabbah confirmed that the AU was prepared to continue to monitor it, but stated that he could not yet say how long the mission would remain in Zimbabwe under the current circumstances. Kabbah did caveat this comment, hinting at some consideration that the violence might be a reality, noting that he was not willing to place his life or the lives of his team in danger.

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Unperturbed by lack of local election observers

17. (C) When asked by the Dutch DCM whether he was concerned about the barriers to accreditation experienced by domestic observers such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN), Kabbah reported that he was unfamiliar with ZESN but that in his experience, local civil society organizations and domestic observers were not capable of objectivity. Kabbah

stated he met with some organizations during the AU mission for the March 29 election and did not have plans to meet with civil society during this trip.

PAP head fears observers' presence legitimizes election

¶18. (C) In stark contrast, the head of the Pan-African Parliament's (PAP) 64-member team, Swazi MP Marwick T. Khumalo, said that "there is nothing fair... there is nothing free about this election." Khumalo reported that he had pulled his observers back to Harare on Monday June 24 after Tsvangirai announced he was pulling out. PAP feared that if it observed the presidential election on June 27, the Mugabe regime would twist it into a "legitimization" of the election. However, he was hesitant to send anyone home since the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) had not officially called off the election. Khumalo said he planned to keep his teams in Harare and do some observation of the situation in the coming days, and that PAP would issue a report on Saturday or Sunday when its observers left. The report was currently being drafted based on reports from observers who had been in rural areas since arriving. Khumalo genuinely feared that he and his team would be in danger once their report documenting the violence and uneven playing field was released.

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¶19. (C) Regarding Tsvangirai's pull-out, Khumalo opined that Tsvangirai made the right decision at the right time. He listed several prominent African leaders who had already condemned the environment and said that if he had stayed in, it would only have helped legitimize an illegitimate Mugabe victory. Asked about the head of the AU mission, Khumalo's face clouded over with disgust and annoyance. He sighed that Kabbah as a politician, too close to Mugabe to be objective. When the Dutch DCM suggested that Kabbah was aiting on a response from the Zimbabwean Attorney General regarding the election's legality, Khumalo laughed and shook his head and commented that the Attorney General was going to toe the ZANU-P party line.

¶10. (C) Dutch poloff asked Khumalo if he planned to keep PAP observers in the field for the three by-elections that will decide three parliamentary seats that are still being contested by MDC candidates. Although he said they were considering it, it was clear he had not given the matter much thought. (NOTE: Since local observers have not been accredited, if these international observers do not go to the polling places, it will be easy for ZANU-PF to steal these three parliamentary seats. END NOTE.)

COMMENT

¶11. (C) The AU's disingenuous perspective is apparently due to Kabbah's longstanding friendship with Mugabe. It's also significant that the mission is relatively small, has had no recent observation experience in Zimbabwe, and to our knowledge traveled relatively little outside of Harare. The PAP was present for the March 29 election and issued a relatively objective report. It traveled more extensively around Zimbabwe in preparation for the runoff election than did the AU, and from our perspective has a good understanding of the situation on the ground. Its influence, however, is limited--most people are unaware of its existence. SADC has had almost 400 observers in Zimbabwe, many of them deployed in the provinces, and its report will have much more significance than those of the AU and PAP. We will report on SADC's observation septel. END COMMENT.

McGee